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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001072

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL PAYNE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ISMAEL OMAR GUELLEH

Classified By: Pol/Econ Erinn C. Reed for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) Summary: Congressman Donald Payne and HIRC Ted Dagne met with President Ismael Omar Guelleh 9 August 2004 during a visit to the Horn of Africa region. Poloff and Charge Gribbin accompanied. Payne and Guelleh discussed regional stability, prospects for Somalia peace accords, the Eritrea/Ethiopian border dispute and the Darfur situation. End Summary.

12. (U) Guelleh began the meeting by summarizing the regional situation, saying that it had been struggling for decades against poverty, famine, and civil war. He continued that is has been and remains Djibouti's first priority to stabilize the region. Guelleh said the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea is an issue of sensitivity and emotions, but with good will on both sides hopefully the situation will be resolved and thousands of displaced persons could return home. Afterwards reconstruction and rehabilitation could begin. He commented that each year \$200 million is spent to keep UN peacekeepers on the border, money which could be used to help the people of the region. Guelleh commented that Eritrea has real famine in that region. On Somalia, Guelleh commented that the peace process will hopefully solve the problems of power sharing and provide a starting point for the transitional government. He said it was necessary to put pressure on and money into Somalia, taking out the weapons and demobilizing and disarming the warlords. Guelleh commented that reaching small, rural villages, AIDS and illiteracy were still large problems that would need to be improved in order to better the situation in Somalia.

13. (C) Guelleh then said Djibouti was happy to have American forces present and to have participated in the fight against terrorism. He commented that there have been very successful operations in 2002 and 2003 to stop the flow of persons trying to reach Somalia, which have resulted in improved maritime security and an end to piracy. However, he continued, Yemen is still not stable and the movement of people from Pakistan and the Gulf countries to East Africa is a difficult problem for intelligence and armed forces. Guelleh stated that Djibouti wants to use its strategic position to contribute to international peace security. Guelleh then mentioned the cooperation between USAID and GODJ in developing education and health, saying both programs have had good progress. Congressman Payne replied that he was pleased that Djibouti is stable, appreciates the welcome and open arms given to the American presence, and looks forward to continued cooperation with Djibouti.

14. (SBU/NF) When asked by Congressman Payne about Somalia peace process and Somaliland, Guelleh replied that Somalia was probably the only country in Africa that could be titled a "nation," based on its common race, culture, religion and language, and that Djibouti believes in the unity of Somalia. He said Djibouti has social and economic ties to Somaliland because they are our neighbors and relatives, but Djibouti has always been for one Somalia. Guelleh said that there is a movement calling for a presidential candidate from Somaliland and that may be a solution that could work. Guelleh said that the clans that make up Somaliland are half in the North and half in the South, and this might be a reason a Somaliland president could succeed. If it did succeed, he said, it would be a very big change. Powersharing between the clans is the only way to peace.

15. (U) As for Guelleh's suggestions on the Ethiopia/Eritrea border disputes, Guelleh said that Ethiopia had not rejected the decision, but wants to be sure that the demarcation was both practical and humanitarian and would be an end to the fight between the countries. He also said that Eritrea feels that the international community is against them. Payne replied that President Isaias of Eritrea has taken the awarding of Badme to Eritrea as the final decision and does not want more discussion and these sorts of corrections should have been made during the process. Guelleh said the decision of the Hague is non-negotiable, a fact that the Ethiopians are aware of, but they feel practicality and humanitarian needs should be taken into account prior to demarcation.

16. (U) Elaborating on Sudan, Guelleh said that it is necessary to determine who is Janjaweed who are Chadians hired by the Janjaweed and put pressure from a firm international community on them to stop. He felt that if the

parties cooperate there could be a resolution within two months. Convincing people to go home from the camps may take longer however.

RAGSDALE